

PAST AND PRESENT OF PUBLIC HISTORY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Liudmyla D. CHEKALENKO, PhD

ORCID: 0000-0002-2819-9424

National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv, Ukraine;

Institute of World History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Leontovych Str. 5, Kyiv
01031, Ukraine.

Email: chekaliudmila@gmail.com

Abstract

The article is devoted to the exploration of the stages of establishment and development of public history. Public history of nowadays is a relatively new field of knowledge in which we try to understand how history can function outside the walls of academic institutions. The emergence of academic history in the 19th century, now called “official history,” was associated with the separation of history from other fields of knowledge. At that time, it was believed that without a professional historical education, it was impossible to be an erudite person, and to tell the past objectively and truthfully. Over time, history gradually became a scientific discipline, as well as an ideological science, as its primary task during the rapid kaleidoscope of changes in various political regimes was to educate ideologically savvy professionals for state-building. Historical science was formed during the creation of nation-states and affirmed the national identity of various social and ethnic groups that formed one nation.

Public history was born by a student movement as a form of youth resistance in parallel with public education since the 1930s through the activities of the American Youth Congress placed in Washington. This organization, which at the time was actively supported by the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, lobbied for the democratization of American society and the promotion of youth programs in the US Congress. Several politicized youth organizations were formed in the 1960s. At the same time, the deep political, economic, and social world crisis of the 1970s – another world upheaval – drew the attention of historical science to the person. As a result, oral history, new social history, and public history have appeared. Gradually, public history became a factor in the democratization of historical science.

Key words: official history, public history, development, crisis of the 1970s, public history of nowadays, Ukrainian narrative.

Over time, history became a scientific discipline, as well as an ideological science, as its primary task during the rapid kaleidoscope of changes in various political regimes was to educate ideologically savvy professionals for state-building. Thus, historical science was formed during the creation of nation-states and affirmed the national identity of different social and ethnic groups that formed one nation. What prompted recent history to approach an individual as a object of study? In our opinion, interest in a person – a phenomenon of any civilization has existed since Hellenic times, and in the era of authoritarianism and totalitarianism has been replaced by interest in power and strength. Such a change, unfortunately, led to the tragic consequences of the First and Second World Wars.

The disproportionately heavy burden of the tragedies of the Second World War and the emergence of new threats to world security in the bipolar period forced two opposing ideological camps to understand the need for dialogue, finding common ground and finding consensus in peacebuilding. The Helsinki process began, and cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union deepened in strategic areas: space and high technology. Security levers have been strengthened, and a regional security structure, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), has been established in the European dimension.

Civilizational exchange contributed to the growth of education of the population, the deepening of the intellectual component of society. At the center of the state and history was an intelligent man – Homo Sapiens, who felt his significance in the world, history and the future. World wars have forced historians to rethink the meaning of life, its fragility and vulnerability. And the deep political, economic, and social world crisis of the 1970s drew the attention of historical science to the person. Oral history, new social history, public history and others appeared, and philosophical and social sciences began to be studied by certain social groups — women, religious communities, working

and student youth, and so on. With the growth of interest in the person, the interest in history as it is, without ornaments and artificial exaggerations, the history of ordinary people and places, increased.

Some famous analytics – both historians and political scientists – devoted their studies to the tasks of public history: Roy Rosenzweig and David Telen, Michael Frisch and Jerome de Groot, President of the International Federation for Public History, Professor Thomas Cauvin and the President of the Italian Association of Public History Serge Noiret. All of them study the opportunities of public history to involve communicating with large audiences and collaborating with historians and non-historians to distribute historical information to the public.

Thus, public history has been studied within several research areas related to European and American education systems. The representatives of the American school Roy Rosenzweig and David Telen [Rosenzweig & Telen 1998], using various methods (including telephone surveys), have investigated the attitude of American society towards the country's past. Based on the data obtained, all respondents were divided into groups. And thus, a more or less fair picture of how modern Americans assess past events was presented.

German researcher Michael Frisch [Frisch 1990], who studied oral, documentary and public history, concluded in his study that public history is a joint production of historical knowledge and is a field of shared authority. When a historian acts as an expert, they do not produce or transmit knowledge on their own but do so together with the audience.

In the book *People and Their Past* [Ashton & Kean (eds.) 2009] the authors consider situations of how knowledge on the past is presented and how such information is perceived by different audiences. At the same time, they study the mechanisms of memory formation through various material objects. And professor in the University of Manchester Jerome de Groot [De Groot 2009] explored the ways of presenting the past in modern space.

In the publications of the early 2000s, American authors show the latest trends in public history: by promoting historical novels and their use in professional historical education; by mastering video footage skills, working as video editors to prepare quality documentaries; by learning how to commercialize history and its relationship with business; by studying legal aspects of historical practices, as well as by revealing the problematic or traumatic past.

European researchers: President of the International Federation for Public History, Professor Thomas Cauvin [Cauvin 2016] and President of the Italian Association of Public History, Serge Noiret, [Noiret 2013] discover the concept of public history “glocalization.” It refers to the subject and the practice of historians interacting with different audiences and is region-specific. Thus, when studying the problematic future, they discuss the issues of World War II, slave trade, prisons and concentration camps, genocide, etc.

We also note that Thomas Cauvin believes that the interaction and collaboration of histories bring about main differences between traditional and public history. Both traditional and public history rely on research, archives, and sources, but public history involves communicating with large audiences and collaborating with historians and non-historians alike to collect and distribute historical information to the public. So, we stress upon “cooperation of histories”, but not a complete rejection of previous achievements of national and foreign historical scientific schools.

In contrast to some authors, the master of historical culture and public history, Professor Jörn Rüsen [Rüsen 2018], argues that the textbook remains the leading medium for teaching history and is still widely recognised as such. Even if pedagogical and didactic fashions come and go, and the conception has been observed over the decades, the school history textbook as a medium has remained largely untouched, although the alternatives have become more numerous.

As far as public history provides for transparency and openness, the International Federation for Public History has established an electronic magazine, *Public History Weekly*, where researchers publish a variety of materials on the subject above. The historians of the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences responded to this information in 2015 by opening the Public History Portal. The information on public history in Russia is regularly placed on the site, as well as interviews with historians on the features of this field of knowledge. We note that the vast majority of Russian scholars do not embrace the popularity of public history abroad. They argue that public history is not an independent product with its own, unique methodology and that it only borrows methodological examples from related fields. This is in the first place. And, secondly, public history is a dual-use phenomenon. On the one hand, it is a research field that studies the forms of the past, and on the other - it is the field of applied activities on creating such representations [Sklokin 2017].

In the Russian scientific community, there are more radical assessments of public history, such as the conclusion that public history “is not a scientific discipline, but rather a profession in which

professionalism involves knowledge of history plus mastering the practices of working with community groups and organizations” [Savelieva 2014, 155].

Moderate analysts from FSU countries argue that the emergence of public history is associated with the attempt of historians to find allies and like-minded people in society, that is, to cover the part of society with which you can start a dialogue. Thus, public history has not yet found appropriate application in post-Soviet scientific and educational practice. There is a possibility that the interest in it might appear due to the need to study repressions and other cataclysms of the 20th century, or, perhaps, due to regional studies or local history.

All the quality parameters of American education emphasize one important advantage of the US education system – its amazing flexibility, which provides an opportunity to combine the range of interests with deep knowledge and narrow, sometimes unique specialization. Unlike the education systems of most other countries, education in the United States is largely decentralized – neither the federal government nor the US Department of Education is involved in defining curricula or educational standards, no to mention their abstention from forming schools and colleges. In the USA, the educational process, the professional level of the teaching staff and the level of diplomas and certificates are controlled by a unique accreditation system.

At the same time, American universities can also be regarded as unconventional, because various monopolies invest heavily in the development of education, and a significant proportion of these funds is directed to support R&D. It all started with a tradition when at the end of the 19th century the prominent figures began to transfer funds for R&D, thus, raising the prestige of universities to an unprecedented level (for example, the Rockefellers – supported the University of Chicago, Stanford millionaires – the Stanford University, etc.). Thus, higher education institutions have become research centers that established contacts with the manufacturing, banking industry, educational centers from all around the globe. Such a system has proved useful. Nowadays, American universities constantly rank among the top five educational institutions in the world and the MIT, Stanford and Harvard are regularly present in the world top five [Osvita v SSHA 2019].

At the same time, to do justice to the advantages of public history, the American experts consistently consider the features of this educational sphere to reveal both the positive and negative aspects of this phenomenon.

In our opinion, one of the convincing arguments regarding the imperfection of public education is that out of more than 6,000 universities in the United States, only 130 have included the subjects of public history in their curricula.

The Ukrainian narrative of public history differs from both European and American approaches [Chekalenko 2019]. The American version is notable for the business large-scale financing of educational projects, whereas the European version is noted for the cautious attitude to the American public history know-how.

According to Ukrainian historians, that generally approve of public history, the development of this educational area requires profound economic changes in the country allowing to attract significant investment in the museum sector, historical tourism, historical media, etc. Ukrainian analysts argue that years into Ukraine's independence there was a lack of systemic policy. To name a few examples during V.Yushchenko presidency including the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance and Holodomor Initiative. But they were not always a success. We borrowed some samples from the Western countries, but not the best ones. As a result, new institutions did not always function properly.

On the other hand, there is a danger of specific attention to public historical initiatives that include instrumentalization in the political struggle and commercialization. Historical tourism may serve as an example of the latter tendency when people start to perceive everything as entertainment, beautiful emotions, an opportunity to take an unusual selfie... Then the educational component, understanding of the complexity of historical processes can disappear [Sklokin 2018].

Before the implementation of public history in US higher education, a student movement had been developing as a form of youth resistance in parallel with public education since the 1930s through the activities of the American Youth Congress, placed in Washington. This organization, which at the time was actively supported by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, lobbied for the democratization of American society and the promotion of youth programs in the US Congress. Several politicized youth organizations formed in the 1960s, such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Liberation of Youth, have taken a close look at educational issues, trying to influence the system and mechanisms of university education by demanding, for example, to abolish state educational programs, to advance student rights, to integrate public schools into the public life.

Clashes with the police, the shootings of students at the Kent, Ohio and Jackson State universities, who protested against US aggressive policy (in Vietnam, Cambodia...), resulted in youth protest marches across the US and raids on the White House. The radicalization of the student movement, which coincided with the deep economic crisis that engulfed the European and American continents, made several American presidents implement a number of educational reforms.

The economic crisis spread, paradoxically, along with a "thaw" in political and humanitarian fields. The USSR and the US as Cold War opposing ideological camps, they both made concessions, found some compromises, established a security organization – the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, implemented a joint space program to launch American and Soviet spaceships – Apollo-Soyuz, opened up the Iron Curtain for cultural exchanges and humanitarian contacts. Although such warming of relations did not last for long enough, the situation opened a window of temporary opportunities, introduced Western information flows into the opposing, previously hostile, socialist camp. Thus, it democratized the population of socialist countries.

Civilizational exchange contributed to the rising educational level of the population and strengthened the knowledge component of society. Homo Sapiens, intelligent person – appeared at the center of the state and history when people felt their importance for the world, history and future. With a growing interest in humans, the interest in history itself - unvarnished and with no false exaggeration - went deep into the history of ordinary people and places.

Addressing oneself, one's self, that is – public history – coincides with the most profound Cold War crisis in the confrontation history of the two ideological camps. However, the 1970s pervasive crisis not only contributed to the democratization of society but also hit a major blow to the advanced economies. The chaotic search for the instruments to overcome the crisis in the United States has traditionally resulted in reduced funding for seemingly irrelevant sectors. In this case, the American administration claimed the irrelevance of education and, in particular, its humanitarian component. The funding for R&D and educational projects in the engineering and natural sciences remained untouched due to their strategic importance to implement the plans of the still ongoing Cold War.

As a result of the reform, the system of humanitarian education was sharply reducing. Historians, philologists, writers and other scholars became unnecessary "parasites" that do not generate wealth. They were fired en masse. In those years, the US unemployment rate reached 9%. And the intelligentsia accounted for a large proportion of the unemployed. The authorities tried to give jobs to the unemployed intellectuals in tour desks, regional research centers of local history and local lore, and special institutions that studied the history of science, religion, and art.

Thus, the resort to public history in the United States was associated with an attempt to overcome the crisis of communication between the representatives of various professions, in particular, the historians. In addition to the above, scholars position in the labor market changed.

Public history as a professional field of study was introduced only in 1976 in the United States, Canada and Australia. The historian R. Kelly was the first to initiate the introduction of the BA program with "Public history" major at the University of Santa Barbara, USA. In Europe, there are still several master's programs in this field of study. In 1978, the first professional magazine, *The Public Historian*, was founded in the United States. In 1979, the U.S. National Council on Public History was established. Since then it annually presents Robert Kelly Memorial Award for "distinguished achievements for making history relevant to individual lives of ordinary people outside of academia" [Kelley 1978].

In 1978, at the first conference on public history held in Phoenix City (Arizona), where the representatives of various professions related to historical science, but engaged outside of academia, met each other. Among them were: the archive and museum staff, defenders of historical landmarks and cultural heritage, consultants and advisers. As a result of the conference, the National Council on Public History and the aforementioned quarterly academic journal *The Public Historian* were established.

A quite fast institutionalization of public history in the US can also be attributed to the existing experience of traditional historians communicating with the public through the established since 1884 American Historical Association. Its mission was to educate and develop teachers, amateur historians, members of local historical societies. The American Public History Movement gained popularity and influence due to the introduction of applied public history courses in university curricula.

Public history in the United States was gradually becoming an academic discipline as far as other historical disciplines on this list below were abolished. Such disciplines include historiography, source studies, pedagogy, archive science, museum studies, historiosophy, art history, which consisted

of the history of music, painting, graphics, monumental art and fine arts, etc.; paleontology, paleography, local lore, ethnology, ethnography, even archeology, etc.

With the elimination of historical disciplines from the university curriculum, the United States soon faced another problem – the lack of specialists in the abolished narrow specializations. It was this gap that the authorities decided to overcome by uniting these narrow directions into a wide range of public history. U.S. public history as compared to academic, is claimed to have certain advantages: 1) does not compete for additional public funding, and is financed from local budgets and sponsors; 2) does not require costs for premises, specific equipment, handouts, etc. However, it is difficult to agree with this opinion, because in order to master the competencies of at least a museum guide, it is necessary to study more than one historical monograph to be able to conduct the tours.

In addition, the international components of humanities separated from history, including diplomacy, diplomatic and consular services, international economic relations, international information, international business, economic diplomacy, military diplomacy, maritime diplomacy, diplomatic documents, diplomatic protocol and etiquette, etc. Today, the achievements and methods of public history are taken into account in political decision-making, in public debates on the American continent. In addition, a new position of a research historian was introduced in the public services of the United States and Canada.

Although public history emerged in Australia and the United Kingdom in the late 1970s, it was associated with the protection of cultural heritage. As for Australia, it was primarily perceived as an approach to the postcolonial understanding of its own past. However, the institutionalization of public history in these countries happened much later. The Public History Review journal has been published in Australia since 1992, whereas UK's History Workshop Journal has appeared only since 1995.

The New History Movement (Neue Geschichtsbewegung) originated outside the university auditorium, played an important role in the formation of social history in West Germany in the 1970s. Locality, specificity and social groups became this movement credo, along with the slogan “Dig where you stand” (“Grabe, wo du stehst”) shaped by Sven Lindqvist. This meant that each person could become a historian of the place where they were born, raised and now live. Thus, a demand for “history from below” emerged, unlike to “top-down” approach [*Osvita v Nimechchyni* 2007].

Oral testimony became another area of Germans' interest in history. It gave rise to a new concept – the concept of a living witness or a witness of events (*Zeitzeuge*). The concept of “a witness of events” thanks to the media was widely implemented in museums in the lessons of the past [*Osvita v Nimechchyni* 2007]. This approach legalized oral testimony as a historical source and brought history behind the walls of academic institutions into a public environment where anyone could work with historical material by collecting eyewitness testimonies.

Public history of the 21st century is included in the educational programs of many higher education institutions. This is observed in Canada and the United States, in Australia, China, Germany, India, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. At the same time, due to widespread advertising and obsessive political agitation before and during the election process, some researchers perceive public history as a component of image campaigns.

We will also recall that unlike in the USA, the European universities, as well as Ukrainian ones retained the components (specializations) of historical science that had been previously abolished by the American universities. In our country, public and private educational institutions operate alongside, and the Ministry of Education and Science regulates and approves educational standards. Although in recent years the Ministry has been implementing the Bologna Process, developed by the specialists from the University of Bologna in Italy (Università di Bologna 2019). World-famous personalities studied at the University of Bologna, including Dante Alighieri, Adam Mickiewicz, Yuri Drohobych (a Ukrainian, who was elected as a rector of the university), Mykola Kopernyk to name a few.

More than 80 leading world universities have joined the Bologna Process. On 21 September 2011, the representatives of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv signed the Great Charter of Universities (Lat. *Magna Charta Universitatum*).

Taras Shevchenko University was one of the top-three universities in the USSR, along with Moscow State University and Leningrad State University. It is ranked as the best university in Ukraine in many rankings. Throughout history, the university has produced many famous alumni including Nikolay Bunge, Mykhailo Drahomanov, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, Nikolai Berdyaev, Mikhail Bulgakov, Viacheslav Chornovil, Leonid Kravchuk, and many others [Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv – About Us 2021].

Conclusion

Which education system is more acceptable in the 21st century: European or American? Recall that the education system in Europe formed on the basis of ancient Greek, Roman, and Byzantine schools and developed on the principles of the Renaissance, Enlightenment, New Age, and Modern Age. It differed and still quite substantially differs from the American education system. The roots of the European system, from which the Ukrainian education system originates, reach the ancient humanistic foundations, such as, Hellenic philosophy, Renaissance values, humanism of Enlightenment, and should be deeper, broader and more spiritual.

Public history is a relatively new field of knowledge in which we try to understand how history can function outside the walls of academic institutions. Nowadays, much attention is given to the representation of history in the public domain, i.e. in mass culture and media, art, cinema, literature, museum and urban science etc. In our opinion, public history will help to understand how historical knowledge functions today in our history, how this knowledge is used in the interests of various individual actors and collective social actors, and finally to identify the grounds for Ukrainian disputes on history.

Thus, public history primarily provides for the human right to knowledge, and historical knowledge gives an opportunity to connect the past and the present. This is probably the field of knowledge that can bring us closer to ourselves, to the family, to the origins, to the code of nation, and identity. Therefore, in our opinion, it is impossible to separate traditional history from public history. These histories – both of them – are part of one whole – of our common existence.

Bibliography

- Ashton, P., Kean, H. (eds.) (2009) *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cauvin, T. (2018) “The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective” in *Historia Critica*, vol. 68(68), pp. 3-26.
- Chekalenko, L. (2019) “Istoriya pamyati abo pamyat istorii: metodolohiya doslidzhennia” [“Memory History or History Memory: A Research Methodology”] in *Evropsky Politycky a Pravny Diskurz*, vol. 5, pp.182-186. [In Ukrainian].
- De Groot, J. (2009) *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*. London & New York: Routledge.
- De Groot, J. (2015) “International Federation for Public History Plenary Address: On Genealogy” in *The Public Historian*, vol. 37(3), pp. 102-127.
- Gardner, J. and Hamilton, P. (eds.) (2017) *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frisch, M. (1990) *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Kelley, R. (1978) “Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects” in *Public History Readings*, vol. 1(1), pp.16-28.
- Noiret S. (2013) “Digital History 2.0” in *Contemporary History in the Digital Age*, Clavert F. and Noiret S. (eds.). Brussels: Peter Lang, 155-190.
- Osvita v SSHA (2012) [The education in the USA] [Online]. Available from: <https://dec-edu.com/ua/articles/obrazovanie-v-ssha-preimushchestva-nestandartnyh-podhodov> [In Ukrainian].
- Osvita v Nimechchyni (2007). [The Education in Germany]. [Online]. Available from: <https://proeducationua.com/?gclid=CjwKCAiA4r> [In Ukrainian].
- Proyty IQ test ukrainskoyu movoyu [“To take IQ Test in Ukrainian”]. [Online]. Available from: <http://iq-test.org.ua/> [In Ukrainian].
- Rosenzweig, R. and Thelen, D. (1998) *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rüsen, J. (2017) “Racism – A Killing Argument in Cultural Studies?” in *Public History Weekly: The Open Peer Review Journal*, vol. 5(8). [Online]. Available from: <https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/5-2017-7/8437/>
- Savelieva, I. (2014) “Professionalnyye istoriki v “publychnoy istorii” [“Professional historians in the ‘public history’”] in *Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya*, vol. 3, pp. 141-155. [In Russian].
- Sklokin, V. (2011) *Derzhava tvoryt natsionalnu pamiat, ale zabuvaie pro riznomanittia spohadiv rehioniv*. [The State creates the national memory but forgot about the differences of Regions]

[Online]. Available from: <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/intervyu/2675-volodimir-sklokin-derzhava-tvorit-natsionalnu-pam-yat-ale-zabuvae-pro-riznomanittya-spogadiv-regioniv/e> [In Ukrainian].

Sklokin, V. (2020) *Shcho take publichna istoriya*. [What is Public History] [Online]. Available from: <https://theukrainians.org/shho-take-publichna-istoriya> [In Ukrainian].

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv: About Us (2021) [Online]. Available from: <https://theconversation.com/institutions/taras-shevchenko-national-university-of-kyiv-814>

Università di Bologna (2020) [University of Bologna]. [Online]. Available from: <https://vyvchay.com/universita-di-bologna#programs> [In Ukrainian].

About the Author

Lyudmyla D. CHEKALENKO is a political scientist, author of 350 scientific works on the foreign policy of Ukraine, international relations and diplomacy. Professor Lyudmyla Chekalenko is a scientist of the State Institution “Institute of World History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine” and professor of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Former Chair of the Department of foreign policy and diplomacy of the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Honored worker of Science and Technology, Doctor of Political Science, diplomat.